



IMPERIAL COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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IMPERIAL COUNTY, CITIES SEEK ACHIEVABLE STATE GUIDELINES FOR RE-OPENING LOCAL ECONOMIES

By Darren Simon, Special to the Joint Information Center

El Centro, CA - Imperial County and its seven cities have jointly issued a letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom's Administration seeking more achievable guidelines that would enable businesses to re-open while still protecting the community's health.

The letter, dated May 14 and signed by Supervisors' Chairman Luis Plancarte and the mayors of each Imperial Valley city, specifically asks the governor to reconsider some of the restrictions established in the state's Stage 2 Readiness Criteria under California's Resilience Roadmap—the state's response to re-opening businesses closed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter states some of the criteria, such as the requirement that a county "has no COVID-19 death in the past 14 days," are unrealistic and standards that counties across the state would struggle to meet.

"I do hope he (Gov. Newsom) takes into consideration the need for achievable guidelines and goals to help move our communities through these difficult times," Plancarte said.

Imperial County and local cities have been working together on a roadmap to recovery that has established a phased approach to the re-opening of local businesses, many of which have remained shuttered for close to two months as a result of COVID-19.

The Imperial County Board of Supervisors as well as city councils across the Valley have made it clear the health of the community remains the leading priority, in particular as COVID-19 cases are continuing to rise in the Valley—largely due to increased testing. The total number of deaths as of today, May 15, stands at 15.

However, local businesses and advocates of local business have asked the county and cities to take steps to re-open the economy as business owners and their employees are continuing to suffer through this challenging time.

"As many are experiencing throughout the state, many of our workers and business owners are struggling to make ends meet," the joint letter to Gov. Newsom's Administration states.

As part of the county's roadmap to recovery, the county has worked jointly with local governments, chambers, non-profits and the Local Health Authority to establish the COVID-19 Recovery Group, an effort to bring about the safe opening of local businesses. Now, the Valley needs the state's help to enable those openings to move forward.

“Our businesses are ready to thoughtfully reopen and adapt with necessary protective measures, working with a new normal, but our communities are looking for achievable criteria to be able to transition through Stage 2,” the letter states.

County and cities officials make it clear in the letter they appreciate the efforts of the state so far in addressing the pandemic and in the steps taken by the governor’s administration to open businesses, and further state they will continue to take all steps to try to keep local communities safe even as they look to move the economy forward.

“It is important to understand and realize we are working together around a single goal in order to keep our communities safe and healthy while transitioning out of this quarantine,” Plancarte said.

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